

SCHOOLS: A LOOK INSIDE

Today: The Times begins a two-part series on how people view education in general in the Seattle area and how those perceptions do and don't mesh with what really goes on behind the doors of Seattle's public schools.

Tomorrow: The second part of the series takes a look at people's attitudes toward busing, where some well known Seattle-area citizens send their children to school and what is behind their choices.

Your views: In the "apple" at the bottom of the page, The Times invites you to respond to the issues raised in the stories in this series, and to give your feelings about the educational quality of the area's schools.



The private Lakeside School in North Seattle has a college-like campus.

Alan Berner / Seattle Times

Seattle Enrollment

Trends 1960, 1970, 1980

	1960	1970	1980
1. City Population:	557,087	530,831	493,846
2. School Age (5-19):	129,114	134,386	80,739
3. Percent of City Total:	23%	25%	16%
4. Minority Children of School Age:	12,500	20,200	25,800
5. Seattle Schools Average Enrollment:	88,200	87,197	50,500
6. Percent Minority Enrollment:	11.4%	18.7%	40.3%
7. Private School Enrollment: ^a	17,900	13,400	12,100
8. Percent of 5-19 Total:	13.8%	10%	15%
9. Ages 5-19, Not Enrolled or Attend Out-of-City: ^{a,b}	29,000	34,000	18,129

^aEnrollments within city limits only.

^bIncludes those 18-19 who graduated from high school, school dropouts and those who enrolled in out-of-city schools, including private institution.

Data from U.S. Census, Seattle School Dist.

Enrollment Comparison with others of about same size

	1982 Enrollment	Seattle	Buffalo	Minneapolis	Oakl'dn	Portland	Toledo
% By Race	45,412	46,757					
White	51.5	45.8	65.2	12.2	72.9	60.3	
Black	23.0	47.2	22.4	64.5	15.2	34.3	
Hispanic	4.4	5.1	1.4	10.7	1.9	4.5	
Asian	18.2	7	6.0	11.9	8.3	8	
Other	2.9	1.2	5.0	.7	1.7	1	
% Children, 5-17 1980							
Below Poverty Level	12.7	18.6	13.9	17.4	15.3	17.1	
Limited English Ability %	6.7	3.7	—	5.6	2.9	.4	
Special Ed. Students %	7.2	11.5	9.8	6.1	8.1	8.7	
Private School Enrl. %	19.3	25.2	16.8	14.5	13.7	23.4	

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the plan is less over the goal than it is over its profound effect on the district's policy-making process.

Stanley O. McNaughton, president of Pemco Insurance Company and chairman of the district's vocational education advisory committee, contends that the district's policy-makers have used educa-

tion for "social adjustment — use of the schools to solve social problems."

The problem with that, says McNaughton, is that the desire to solve social problems such as segregation soon overcomes the responsibility of the schools to "develop the faculties of the student so he can read or write and think and so he's got the basic equipment to handle problems."

Royer and Chamber of Commerce

Education Committee chairman Larry Ransom, among others, disagree.

Ransom and Royer say the district's plan promotes quality education, and the cultural mix provides a learning experience in itself.

Apart from the fighting over what constitutes a quality education, there has been the effect of the politicking on the district's administrative staff.

Roe argues, and Nelson and McNaugh-

ton agree, that some elements of the district's sub-administration, particularly in Houston's curriculum office, have begun to play both ends against the middle — that they advocate positions within the district administration, then go outside the district to line up community support for their position.

That's what happened to Steele, Roe argues. "He was undercut by some people on the staff," she says.

Royer is one who believes that continuing controversy over the schools, while showing that the schools are vital, brings with it negative imagery that only reinforces the vague public impression that Seattle Schools are too disorganized and too caught up in politics to do an effective job.

The problem posed by the image is more than one of mere cosmetics.

Among other things, Royer says, the public school system's image is a consideration among those who might live, work and invest in the city.

Perhaps even worse, the image may actually create the reality.

As the numbers of parents who can afford to pull out of city schools increase, the system itself begins to deteriorate: levy issues fail at a greater rate, bonds are turned down by taxpayers with no interest in schools, the quality of education drops, crime increases, and a whirlpool of inevitable educational malaise threatens to wash the whole system down the drain.

The Seattle district's share of those who are of school age is going down faster than the total number of children in the city.

In 1960, the gap between the district's enrollment total and the number of children of school age was about 25 percent. In 1980 it was almost one-third.

But Royer and Ransom both point out that for the first time in 20 years, the city's birth rate is on the rise.

That, they say, offers the opportunity to regenerate public support for Seattle Public Schools.

The key, Royer says, is to focus on what Seattle Public Schools have that the private schools don't: a broad education, diverse in opportunities to learn both from books as well as from people.

Parents are consumers of education, Royer points out, and private schools sell their customers on the value of their product. Seattle Public Schools, he says, are going to have to do the same.

In Seattle, while blacks only constituted about 19 percent of the high-school enrollment last year, 39 percent of all high-school students suspended or placed on long-term suspension were black. By comparison, 46 percent of the expelled or suspended high-school students were white, but whites made up 54 percent of the high-school population.

Seattle Schools hired Dr. Junious Williams, professor of black studies at California State University-Fresno, to work with principals and administrators on finding ways to reduce the gap.

Tougher discipline was high on the list for former Superintendent Donald J. Steele. Ironically, one of the complaints that prompted his resignation was a complaint by black community representatives that the number of minority

Seattle offers more options than do suburbs

by Constantine Angelos
Times staff reporter

North Seattle parents Peggy and Manuel Tramontanas moved their two sons out of Seattle Public Schools and into a Catholic school five years ago because they wanted to give them a better education.

But this year, George and Athan Tramontanas are back in Seattle Schools. The reason, say their parents, is the district's special Horizon Program for gifted children.

"Next year George will have computer literacy and typing, and that is something he wouldn't have had at St. John's," said Peggy Tramontanas.

"If they offer the programs, I'd always pick the public schools," but, she adds, that is no guarantee her children will stay.

"We have learned to take every year as it comes."

Seattle considers its alternative educational programs "critical tools" for keeping and attracting students in an urban school district, says Dr. Wayne Foley, coordinator of integration services.

The programs are designed to keep students involved in the district's desegregation in their assigned schools by giving them something at the end of the bus ride that they can't get otherwise, Foley says.

Facts show that Seattle is one large urban district that stacks up well when it comes to these special programs. Its variety of options, more than 20 in all, is broader than what many of its more stable suburban cousins offer, although that isn't always the popular perception.

Ninety percent of people surveyed in a recent Seattle Times poll said the availability of advanced programs is important to them, and many believed suburban schools have better special programs, such as those for gifted children, than do Seattle schools.

Which type of district has better special programs: Seattle School District or suburban school districts?

Numbers in per cent

	Seattle	Suburban	Private
Parents	24.7	31.1	28.9
Don't know	34.7	40.5	22.2
Parents	37.3	23.0	40.0

Does your child's school place too much, not enough or the right amount of emphasis on fine arts programs?

Numbers in per cent

	Seattle	Suburban	Public	Private
Too much	0.0	1.7	1.2	0.0
About right	55.2	56.7	51.2	76.2
Not enough	32.3	29.2	34.3	16.7
Don't know	12.5	12.5	13.4	7.1

But the facts are that most suburban districts offer fewer options than Seattle does, and Seattle often outdistances its urban cousins in other parts of the country.

For example, while Seattle offers 10 different kinds of elementary-school option programs, Mercer Island provides only a gifted program in the fourth through eighth grades and an honors program in high school.

Dr. Apolinar P. Diaz, Mercer Island's director of curriculum and instruction, explains that his district does not do more partly because of its size (about 3,500 students), and also because the students are much the same.

"Generally speaking, we fulfill the needs of most of the kids within the general program," Diaz said.

Lynn Straight, special-projects administrator for the Lake Washington School District, agrees.

"For the most part, our regular

programs can accommodate a whole variety of kids." The Kirkland-based district offers two programs for about 500 gifted students through high school and some open-concept alternative programs.

Seattle's option programs range from the Horizon Program for gifted children to multi-arts and traditional basic-skills programs. Options are offered in 47 elementaries, nine middle schools and in eight of the 10 high schools.

The School Board last week approved spending \$2.1 million on additional options programs next year. The package will create 48 additional choices in 34 elementary schools.

Present options are "paid for" out of the regular staffing allocation in the \$112 million budgeted for instruction for each school and from about \$670,000 in federal desegregation aid.

But while option programs so far have drawn about 50 percent of children in elementary schools that have busing, 60 percent are minority children. The Horizon Program, with about a 31 percent minority enrollment, is an exception.

Foley points out that the option programs are considered "critical desegregation tools," designed to make the district attractive to students in the wake of mandatory busing.

"Our need is to attract more white kids," Foley says. He said district planners are banking that the expanded option program next year will encourage more white parents to keep their children in assigned schools in the busing plan or to volunteer for options in schools that need a larger white mix.

Sam Husk, executive director of the Council for the Great City Schools, said Seattle is not unlike many large-city school systems in using option or "magnet" programs to try to upgrade urban education.

Milwaukee high schools offer 36 options and Pittsburgh high schools offer 10, Husk said. But he added that Seattle may be outdistancing many other large districts in the number of students involved in options down through elementary school.

Reed notes that Seattle is the only

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Reader response

How do you feel about what people surveyed for The Times education poll had to say? Let us know and we'll publish the responses in a future issue.

Send to:
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How important is discipline to you when thinking about your child's school?

Numbers in per cent

Seattle Suburban Public Private

Very important: 78.4 79.7 77.6 90.5

Some what important: 18.6 14.6 17.8 7.1

Discipline is a top concern

by Constantine Angelos
Times staff reporter

School discipline is a top priority with King County parents, The Seattle Times education poll shows, but despite a new "get tough" policy in Seattle Schools, city parents were more likely than suburban parents to say that discipline is not strong enough.

Discipline — or the lack of it